

PETITIONS SCHEME

1. INTRODUCTION

A document will be treated as a petition if it is identified as such, or if it seems that it is intended to be a petition, subject only to the qualification in the following paragraph. A petition is a document submitted to the Council spontaneously by the public i.e. without any request from the Council. If the Council carries out a public consultation exercise, and receives a mass response to it, that response will be dealt with as part of the consultation, rather than as a petition.

Petitions can be sent to the Council and may be presented to:

- (a) a meeting of the Council
- (b) a meeting of Cabinet
- (c) one of the Council Committees, or
- (d) the Chief Executive

A petition may be presented by the petitioner organiser or by a councillor on the petitioners' behalf.

2. GUIDELINES FOR SUBMITTING A PETITION

All petitions must include:

- a) A clear and concise statement covering the subject of the petition including what action the petitioners wish the Council to take; and
- b) The name and address, and signature, of any person supporting the petition.

Petitions must also be accompanied by contact details for the petition organiser including an address.

Petitions may only be organised and signed by people who live, work or study in the borough area, including those under 18 years of age.

Petitions which are considered by the Chief Executive to be vexatious, abusive or otherwise inappropriate will not be accepted. If, as determined by the Chief Executive, a petition does not follow the guidelines set out above, the Council may decide not to do anything further with it. In that case, the Chief Executive will write to the petition organiser explaining the reasons for that decision.

3. THE COUNCIL'S RESPONSE TO A PETITION

An acknowledgement will be sent to the petition organiser within 10 working days of receipt explaining what the Council intends to do in response to the petition. If the Council can do what the petition asks for, the acknowledgement may confirm that it has taken the action requested and the petition will be closed.

The Council will consider what specific actions are available to address the issues highlighted in a petition and respond appropriately to the petition organiser. In the period commencing six weeks before an election the Council may need to deal with a petition differently. If this is the case officers will explain the reasons for this and discuss the revised timescale with the petition organiser.

If a petition applies to a planning or licensing application, or a matter where there is already an existing right of appeal, such as council tax banding and non-domestic rates, other procedures apply. This petition process does not therefore apply in these cases. However, all petitions relating to planning applications will be reported to councillors and referred to in the officer's report to the Council's Development Control Committee. If a petition concerns a matter over which the Council has no direct control it will consider making representations on behalf of the community to the relevant body. If it is not able to do this for any reason (for example if what the petition calls for conflicts with Council policy), then the Council will explain the reasons for this to the petition organiser.

4. FULL COUNCIL DEBATES

If a petition contains more than 4,000 signatures the petitioners have the right to require it to be debated by full Council. At the Council meeting, the petition organiser may present the petition (for up to five minutes) and it will then be discussed by councillors for a maximum of 20 minutes.

The Council will decide how to respond to the petition. It may decide to take the action the petition requests, or not to do so for reasons put forward in the debate, or to commission further investigation into the matter. Where the issue is one on which the Cabinet is required to make the final decision, the Council may make recommendations to inform that decision. The petition organiser will receive written confirmation of this decision and this will also be published on the Council's website.

5. REVIEW OF PETITIONS

If a petition organiser feels that the Council has not dealt with the petition properly, s/he has the right to request that the relevant Overview Committee reviews the steps that the Council has taken in response to the petition. The petition organiser may be invited to address the meeting.

If the Committee decides that a petition has not been dealt with adequately, it may use any of its powers to deal with the matter, including instigating an investigation, making recommendations to the Cabinet, or arranging for the matter to be considered at a meeting of full Council.

Once the appeal has been considered the petition organiser will be informed of the results within five working days. The results of the review will also be published on the Council's website.